

Interview with Marguerite Hovey (Margo) Squire

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Program
Foreign Service Spouse Series

MARGUERITE 'MARGO' HOVEY SQUIRE

Interviewed By: Kristie Miller

Initial Interview Date: January 22, 1993

Q: This is Kristie Miller and I am interviewing Margo and Grady (infant son) at Margo Squire's home on January 22, 1993, in Bethesda, Maryland ... Margo, you are the third generation in the Foreign Service, that's got to be fairly unique. I gather your grandfather was in the Foreign Service.

SQUIRE: Yes, he worked for Commerce and also Agriculture. While he was at the University of Chicago he put himself through working summers at stockyards so when he graduated he worked for Commerce until they were opening up in London and they opened up an Agricultural office there. They asked him to work for Agriculture there, so he went back and forth between Commerce and Agriculture for awhile.

Q: And he went in before 1921, right after World War I?

SQUIRE: I'm not sure exactly when he went in, but yes, that's my understanding.

Q: And then I gather that your grandmother, who was a widow, helped your mother with some of her Foreign Service connections, and was something of a role model.

SQUIRE: My grandfather was stationed in Poland at the time that World War II was breaking out, as Poland was taken over by the Germans. He was actually reassigned and

Library of Congress

on his way back to Washington when he died and so they were in transit. Everything, all their money was tied up because of the war, and so my grandmother, who was originally British - they'd met in London - suddenly had no money and had one child in university, although my dad went to the war, and another daughter who was in boarding school and then university, to support. So she took a secretarial course and became an executive secretary. The people that hired her were the Australians.

Q: The Australian Embassy.

SQUIRE: The Embassy, because the Ambassador she had known from living years and years and years as a dependent in Sydney, because my grandfather was the Trade Commissioner there. She actually organized all the social events and the parties and receptions for the Ambassador, and so met lots and lots of people and knew a lot of people. So through that as well as earlier career in the Foreign Service, and particularly in Australia, when my father was assigned to Australia, was able to help my father and my mother a lot. Q: Did you know her?

SQUIRE: Yes. Well, I knew her vaguely. Most of the time she lived in Australia. Obviously it's so far away we didn't really see much of her. She would come through, Australians always tend to make the great jaunt around. She had remarried an Australian. Meanwhile, my father's only sister, only sibling, settled in Australia and married an Australian and lives there too. So my grandmother was pretty settled there, but she would come through and visit us in Moscow, or wherever we were. Occasionally.

Q: Did you decide early on that you wanted to be in the Foreign Service?

SQUIRE: I did. I think when I really decided that I was interested was in the '70s. I wanted to find something that was overseas. My interests were history and geography and cultural relations. In 1976 I saw a brochure put out by the Carter administration on the U.S.

Library of Congress

Information Service. This was when USIA was renamed and reorganized into International Communications Agency, USICA. I remember thinking, "This is what I'm interested in."

Q: How old were you then?

SQUIRE: I was a freshman in college. My interest in things American, because of growing up overseas. I had a real thirst for finding out what the United States was and what it meant to be an American, as well as history. The whole range of social studies all seemed to come together in what was then USICA. I actually got an internship when I was graduated from college at ICA. That was in '79, but it wasn't until '84 that I actually joined USIA.

Q: What did you do in the meantime?

SQUIRE: Right out of college I took the Civil Service exam. Believe it or not, I got a job with the Justice Department as a paralegal, because I thought, "Maybe I'll go into law." I had a romantic interest in someone who was interested in law and clearly wasn't going to be traveling anywhere. My interest in law soon petered out working at the Justice Department. It was the Reagan years and constitutional law was really being pulled out. I was working in Civil Rights and that really was being pulled back more and more and more. It was a really tough time and I decided, "No, I really want to get back into international relations."

I ended up going to graduate school. My father, in the meantime, had been transferred from Australia to Leningrad so I took some time off, went to Leningrad. I ended up quitting my job, deferring graduate school for another year, and working in Moscow and Leningrad for a year. Taking advantage of him being there.

Q: Where did you work?

SQUIRE: Actually, in Moscow I got a job in the Cultural Section so I was working there.

Library of Congress

Q: Oh, great!

SQUIRE: I worked there for a while until... It was a really bad time in our relations and our cultural relations were cut back after Afghanistan in the Carter years. One of the things that we did was cut back not only the Olympics in 1980 - this was 1981 - but also our cultural exchanges were cut. Things were really slow and I decided that there was a good job in Leningrad. They had a contract position for an economic political junior officer, which after I left became a Foreign Service position and they expanded the Consulate. For me it was just wonderful. I could wander around and go to all the markets and report on what was being sold, and how much things were, and what was in the stores.

Q: But you were a local hire at that point.

SQUIRE: I was a local hire. Absolutely. Then I came back and did two years of graduate school. In my second year of graduate school I got married to a Foreign Service officer that I met in Moscow. I also joined the Foreign Service, USIA.

Q: What did you study in graduate school?

SQUIRE: I was at SAIS, which forces you to have two areas of concentration. One of them was international economics and the other was mostly Soviet, Eastern European. I was trying to branch out to do more Western European and Asian things too.

Q: What's your husband's area of specialty, if he has one?

SQUIRE: Eastern Europe, former Soviet Union.

Q: So then your first post overseas was back to Moscow?

SQUIRE: No, my first post overseas was in Munich. I was a junior officer trainee. At the same time my husband was sent to Prague. It was good because we could drive back and forth on the weekends. USIA refused to send a junior officer trainee to Prague. That

Library of Congress

was in 1984, '85. Things were not opening up. Eastern Europe was pretty dead and Czechoslovakia in particular. Ironically, two classes after mine, we did assign a junior officer trainee to Czechoslovakia, and, try as we could, we couldn't get my assignment changed around. Anyway, so I ended up doing a year in Munich and a year in Moscow apart from my husband. He joined me there after I was there a year. He joined me and we were there for three more years together. So I was there for four years from '86 to '90.

Q: And by then you were a full-fledged officer. You were no longer a trainee. And what was your responsibility in Moscow?

SQUIRE: To the Press Section. I was Assistant Information Officer, AIO. There were two of us under the Press Spokesman and I was mostly responsible for television, film, radio - electronic media. And the other Assistant Press Officer was on the written press, but we backed each other, and long periods of time I was the press spokesman because you draw in the course of four years a lot.

Q: Because the head guy would be gone?

SQUIRE: He'd be gone. In fact, three came and left in the time that I was there, so I was sort of training people right and left. That was sort of fun.

Q: It is sort of fun.

SQUIRE: The first time that I was Acting there came very soon after I'd arrived in '86 when we arrested in New York - and I don't know if you remember the whole Daniloﬀ affair - but we arrested a Soviet UN employee who was non-diplomatic in New York. Caught him flagrantly trying to buy atomic secrets. His name was Dmitri Zakharov. And in exchange the Soviets snatched somebody in Moscow who didn't have diplomatic status and this was the American journalist Nicholas Daniloﬀ, the U.S. News and World Report correspondent.

Library of Congress

And so instantly this was a big story because this was a particularly bad point in U.S.-Soviet relations. We had put a ceiling on the Soviet employees at the UN. Completely unrelated, but it all tied together and we'd given them a deadline of October first that they were to draw down the number of people that they had or we were going to start making cuts. And in fact we started doing that and expelled a number of people from the UN. Well, they turned around and then started expelling people from our Embassy in Moscow. And then...

Q: Did you ever think you might be expelled? Was that a worry?

SQUIRE: Not really because I had just arrived and they were basically pinpointing people. It was a little bit of a concern because it was a tit for tat so that as we would expel a certain rank officer, they would expel the same rank. I remember going through this with my father back in the '60s when we caught two diplomats in Washington, two Soviets spying, and they turned around and one was a... I think my dad was a first secretary and it was a first secretary in the Soviet Embassy. And there were only three first secretaries in the Soviet Embassy in Moscow. One of them was my father. And so we went through about a five-day period when we didn't know - we had just arrived - whether we were going to be leaving. And in fact they kicked out two other people who have never been able to go back since.

In this latest round, we kicked out a group of five and they kicked out a group of five. Then they kicked out another group of five in retaliation, and they kicked out another group of five. And it got down to the third group when they raised the ante by saying, "And not only that, but we're going to take away all the Soviet employees of Embassy." Well there were a number, a couple of hundred, maybe three hundred, working... Most of them were drivers and mechanics and things like that. But there were also people like press assistants. Most of them were substantive jobs. They were mostly chars and drivers, I guess. Translators, things like that.

Library of Congress

We found out about this on the 9 o'clock evening news. They announced, "And we're going to blah, blah, blah." Well, of course we turned around and kicked out all the Americans working for the Soviets. Well there were six editors working for Soviet Life Magazine because the Soviets around the world bring their full staffs with them. They bring their chauffeurs, they bring everything, basically to avert any sort of counter-intelligence threat. Of course we have a poorer society to begin with. So what's a driver going to find out, and we're being bugged anyway, so who cares? We'd rather not have to spend the money to bring drivers and all those people over there, because Americans are expensive as you can imagine.

So literally the next morning we went in and there was no one there. And so the second day they had to come up with a system to keep us afloat and so came up with two different rosters. One was for laborers and one was for char corps. And the laborers were mostly able-bodied, mostly men and the char corps were mostly women, mostly men with bad backs or anyone else who had a bad back who couldn't lift and haul things. And everyone from below the DCM, so counselors on down.

So the first day it was pretty amazing. There were two counselors. My counselor, for Press and Culture, Ray Benson, who was certainly an older gentleman, an scholarly type, who had never been anything under a Public Affairs Officer, and he came in at that rank and he had been to several posts and retired from Moscow. And then the Administrative Counselor also, David Beal. So unfazed, everyone set to work and they came back at the end of the day calling themselves the "Killer Bees." (laughter)

We had a sort of semi-staff meeting in fact, and Ray Benson came in. Of course all of us were a little bit intimidated by Ray Benson to begin with who worked for Press and Culture. And he was kind of concerned about how he was going to take having to be out there. He'd been assigned to washing cars in the Motor Fleet. And so he came in in the middle of the meeting and just burst in and started explaining how he had discovered this new way to use the sprinkler so that you could wipe everything off, and he was in full force

Library of Congress

explaining this whole thing, and we were just amazed. He was clearly into the spirit of things.

Q: So that's what it was like. Morale was very high.

SQUIRE: In it was probably higher because we were all working together. You knew that many more people in the Embassy because you were working with them. (Child break)

Q: The AP What does that mean?

SQUIRE: I don't remember what that stood for. I can't remember. That's what was called the rosters and the work.

Q: Oh. The sort of work assignments.

SQUIRE: Yes, and every other week you were on duty which meant that you had to scrub the floors and wash the toilets or stock the shelves in the Commissary or drive delivering. There was a lot of delivering of invitations to receptions and things like that because of course there were no messengers and no drivers. One thing that kept us going was the comradeship because it was a very large Embassy at that point in Moscow.

Q: How many?

SQUIRE: I've heard the number 350, but I don't know if that's exactly right. There were lots of employees. In fact it was a real problem because another thing that the Soviets did at the same time that they pulled our local hires, they also set a ceiling. And of course we then matched that with the ceiling in Washington. But it was very hard because nobody knew exactly how many people there were because there were so many coming through doing construction in the new Embassy. At any given time, we didn't know how many visas were out.

Library of Congress

And that's what the Soviets were counting. How many visas. And how many diplomatic spots there were versus how many people were actually there. How many people would you want to hire. And then when they started replacing Soviet drivers with Americans - you know, college graduates and contract employees.

Q: You started bringing people in for that kind of work?

SQUIRE: We started bringing people in. Basically we had to go from October until April just keeping the place afloat, and then from April on the first few people started coming in that were hired to work under contract at the Embassy doing manual labor and things like that. And we didn't know how many slots we had or how many people we could actually hire for a while. Constantly you were submitting lists to the DCM or the Admin Counselor to discover how many people there were at any given time. But it was very funny how it kept fluctuating.

But one thing that kept us going also was the thought that if the Soviets in Washington had had all their drivers pulled, we couldn't imagine a Soviet Colonel driving himself or having to scrub toilets and things like that. But good old Yankee ingenuity would see us through.

Q: Oh I love the idea of your boss out there, the "Killer Bee."

SQUIRE: Out there. Yes, it was wonderful.

Q: It didn't wear thin as the months dragged on?

SQUIRE: Well it did in the sense that of course you were supposedly excused from your work, but you never really could be, and so you were constantly going to do your job at lunch breaks or whatever and then after hours. But I think the morale was never as high in the Embassy as it was in that period. It was also a great period of very anti-Soviet and anti-American sentiment in the two countries, so it was a tough time to be there, even without the lack of local hire and that whole sort of unpleasantness. Our contacts were

Library of Congress

limited, and there was a very hunker-down mentality to begin with. So that it was actually a very good time to get to know your other fellow Americans there.

Q: And this was at the beginning of your four years there?

SQUIRE: This was the beginning of my four years.

Q: And you were also separated from your husband?

SQUIRE: Right.

Q: And you didn't even have the luxury of seeing him on the weekends the way you had when he was in Prague.

SQUIRE: No, it was pretty good. We saw each other every four to six weeks, something like that. And a lot of my salary went to flying back and forth. Between Prague and Moscow there are two airlines - the Czech and Aeroflot, the Soviet Russian airline, and they're both monopolies so they basically charged you what they wanted to charge you. Discount rates? (laughter)

Q: Even that did not dampen your spirits, being separated or having that as a hardship?

SQUIRE: No, but another thing that was hard... Ironically, because of our relationship and also the security threat, we were constantly getting lectures and being warned about counter-intelligence threats and things like that, so we always had to go everywhere in pairs. If you went out to a Soviet apartment or anything, you had to be with another American, and obviously as a married couple it's very easy because it's very logical that you do something with your spouse. Singles, it was also pretty logical. Maybe you'd bring along a friend. But I was in this weird position where my husband wasn't there, so I was constantly having to ask people in the Embassy to come with me which is a little bit awkward.

Library of Congress

And in fact, the way the whole situation was, I was under greater fear from our own security than from Soviet security. I knew I could handle myself, but I was constantly afraid that if I went out and did something on my own which people did - I mean there are times when you have to - someone was going to find out and somehow it was going to hurt my job or whatever.

Q: You'd get a security violation.

SQUIRE: So I was more afraid of our staff. (laughter) And there was a real mentality where Security was... This was just after the Lonetree affair where the security of the Embassy had theoretically been breached. A Marine had let Soviets into the Embassy, which it turns out he probably hadn't, although he had given out plans and things like that.

Q: With his girlfriend, right? A Soviet girlfriend?

SQUIRE: Right. It was in fact a former employee of the Embassy on the char force. So that Security basically had its heyday. It was taking its stand and they were not going to be caught sleeping like the previous Security Force.

Q: Under whose watch the Lonetree incident had happened.

SQUIRE: Exactly.

Q: So they were really vigilant.

SQUIRE: And so that was a...

Q: Pain in the neck.

SQUIRE: Pain in the neck, yes, it really was. And on top of that, then you had the Soviet KGB who were also doing very nasty things. Whenever the Jewish Anti-Defamation League in New York would knock some windows out or do something to the Russians

Library of Congress

there, they would turn around and break our windows and things like that. And so there was a whole spate of windows being broken. In the first six months I was there, I had this little Toyota Starlet which they don't sell in this country. It was one of the earlier Honda Civics. A very, very small little car that I'd bought in Germany which was perfect for me while I was alone there. The muffler went and I thought this was very strange.

Well, it just so happened that they opened up a Toyota shop. The Japanese in conjunction with a Finnish company. So they had Finnish employees coming through occasionally, but mostly it was run by Russians. They had just opened it up. I took it out and the first thing that they say as they hoisted up the car and they were looking at the car was, "Do you have an enemy?" Because it turned out that it had been cleanly shaved through.

Q: This is the Japanese body shop?

SQUIRE: Right. Oh actually they were Finnish workers who were there. So early on I had my taste of it with my muffler and I think looking back at the time I had a feeling that it was because they were basically trying to warn me. To keep me away from...

At that point our major contacts were with unofficial artists and cultural types who were on the verge of dissidence, and Jewish Refuseniks who were trying to leave because the average Russian was just petrified of having an association with an American. Most of my life when I've been going back and forth to the Soviet Union, our relations have just been terrible. There with my father it was the post-Khrushchev thaw, pre-Detente. 1966 to '70 was a terrible time in U.S.-Soviet relations.

Q: And how old were you at that point?

SQUIRE: I was nine to twelve.

Q: And so you were old enough to feel that?

Library of Congress

SQUIRE: Oh absolutely.

Q: Tell me a little bit more about that. That would be an interesting comparison.

SQUIRE: The beauty I think of growing up in the Foreign Service is the different cultures that you're exposed to and the different nationalities. Everything that goes with it. The festivities, the awareness, flexibility, hopefully, that it gives you, and better understanding of your own self and your own culture. In Moscow, you could get a veneer of the Russian culture, but you couldn't get to know Russians. Chance encounters, yes. Most of my friends were then Americans or actually other nationalities. Japanese, Finns, Latin Americans, Pakistanis, Indians. Mostly English-speaking, but a lot of time Russian was the lingua franca because we were there.

Q: So you learned Russian then?

SQUIRE: Yes. Enough street Russian and getting around. The society was such, it was basically a martial state. It was a very safe place for young children to wander around and basically we could go anywhere. It's a city larger than New York City, something like 6 million people at that point. I can remember being ten and twelve years old and just going everywhere on the subway and buses alone or with one or two friends. So I was exposed to the various cultures, but it wasn't Russian so much as it was the various people that I went to school with at the Anglo-American School which were mostly Commonwealth nations. A lot of Africans and Asians. Some Europeans. Not as many Brits because they go to boarding school.

Q: How did your parents deal with the bunker mentality there and did that affect you? How was morale during that tough period?

SQUIRE: Well again, at any hardship post, you tend to make very good, close friendships with a few people. In our apartment building, there were Americans, Canadians. Along this one. It was a big square with a huge courtyard in the middle. And on one side it was

Library of Congress

mostly the NATO countries, and so you got to be very close with them. My father's job as Science Attach# brought him actually in contact with probably as many Russians as anyone in the Embassy. That was the time when we were having a lot of scientific exchanges and a lot of fishery groups, a lot of space exchanges and things like that. So he did a lot of that.

It was also the heyday of Soviet science. There was a big effort to start a whole new scientific utopia out in Siberia. So my father was going out there to Akademgorodok just outside of Novosibirsk quite often and he got to know a lot of people.

And we ended up staying there four years and he became the Economic Counselor. And with that job, he lost basically the contacts he had before. It was a whole new group of people. There was a little bit of overlap, but basically he was told that was it. I don't know - my mother probably has in her transcript this story of how people that they had seen for three years and all the time and gotten very close with, because there was that official veneer, were suddenly gone.

One night they were at the ballet and ran into someone at the intermission or somebody came up to them in the dark. I can't remember exactly how it was. They said basically, "I can never see you again, but it was wonderful. I just wanted to say good-bye and I'm sorry that we can't meet each other."

Q: That was so nice to let them know.

SQUIRE: But you got chance encounters like that. There was one time we spent a vacation in Greece and came back in through the Black Sea on a Soviet cruise ship and until it got actually to Istanbul, it was very Greek. Once it turned into the Black Sea, it suddenly became Soviet. The dining room was cut back in half. Most of the tourists got off in Turkey. They went along the Greek coast and then got off. But because we were a week or something like that with the same group of people, my mother got very close with...

Library of Congress

My father had actually had to fly back so it was my mother and my two brothers and I on the boat. So she got very close to this one gentleman who was there with his young daughter. And he would have dinner with us every night and he played chess with my brothers. And so we got back to Moscow and we had all these plans to get back together. And so we did invite them once and he came and he was clearly so nervous about the whole thing and having to run the gauntlet of coming by the Soviet guard in the front and the whole thing, he said, "I can't ever come again."

Q: And your house was probably bugged.

SQUIRE: Oh absolutely.

Q: How did that affect you, either as a child or when you were back there as an adult in your own post?

SQUIRE: You knew it so you worked around it. And I basically took the mentality that... Basically you were always warned not to talk about sensitive things. Not to talk about personal things because the majority of people who have been blackmailed have been blackmailed for personal problems. They've needed money or whatever. So we were told to never argue with your spouse, never to talk about things. Well, that's unreal. That's ridiculous. And I basically took the attitude that anything that they could learn from the walls about me they probably already knew. It wasn't worth knowing. The whole idea was that you were going to go into the Embassy to a special place and argue these things out and have your fights or whatever, but that's unreal. And people fight and people live and you have problems. It doesn't mean you're vulnerable to the KGB.

Q: And your husband adopted your attitude when he came to Moscow?

SQUIRE: Yes, and I think also by the time... In earlier times when we were there in the '70s, when I was visiting my father, or 1980, that was also a very hard time in U.S.-Soviet relations and I remember my father and my mother would go for long walks in the park in

Library of Congress

Leningrad when they had things that they had to talk about. I guess in retrospect that's also dumb because any strong intelligence service can pick up conversations like that in parks and in the middle of cities. But it was probably pretty good for them to get outside anyway. They used to walk their dog. They had an Irish setter, and they would walk the dog. I don't know whether that's also in my mother's story. I was back here when they were leaving Leningrad and they were packing up and they were going to stop somewhere en route. So they sent the dog out early. I was in New Hampshire so I went down to Boston to pick up the dog and the dog didn't arrive. And they had carefully arranged a way that the dog could go through in one day - I don't know whether it was Finnair - and then it passed through Frankfurt and on. And they handed the dog over to the Finnair representative in Leningrad who they knew and so the dog didn't arrive. So we traced her back, and she was in Frankfurt overnight and hadn't made the flight or something. There was this whole sort of strange thing.

So I went down the next day and picked her up and she was fine. My parents came two days later at which point she started having problems swallowing.

Q: The dog.

SQUIRE: The dog. And she got this big tumor in her throat. We took her to the vet and he said, "Basically this will either get healed by antibiotics or, sorry." And it turned out that something irritated her throat and the doctor, sort of thinking this whole thing out, said that it's very possible that in the loose folds of skin there had been some sort of listening device implanted that was removed when she left. There was a yard man who used to walk the dog a lot who would take her to the Soviet vet occasionally when she needed check-ups. The Soviets are very stringent about these yearly things. And so it's totally possible because they knew that my family would go out and walk the dog to talk that it was a very logical place to put something. Whether that's being paranoid or just chance that that happened to happen at the same time. But she was lost for those 24 hours or 12 hours or whatever, and...

Library of Congress

Q: And the thought is that they were de-bugging her.

SQUIRE: And I'm sure that that's not beyond the realm of possibility, particular since my father was the Consul General and so would have a lot of things concerning him and other things. But I can't imagine that they would ever go out and talk about things anyway. My father was a very closed person to begin with. But anyway, that was sort of interesting, and in that period I remember being a lot more careful and worried about it.

Q: This was the 1980 period when your parents were there and you were just there visiting?

SQUIRE: Yes, but when I was there on my own, I can occasionally remember writing things down on a piece of paper, particularly in the beginning because...

Q: To show to somebody so they wouldn't hear it.

SQUIRE: Exactly. Particularly because that was only the very beginning of Glasnost and Gorbachev and Sakharov was still in Gorky. There was still a strong crackdown on dissidents. And the contacts that we had in the Embassy were essentially out of that group. It was either a totally official Ministry of Foreign Affairs type relationship, or it was these people who had nothing to lose. In fact they had something to gain from being associated with you. And I think that's one of the reasons that - back to my muffler being cut - they were trying to warn me to stay away from some of these people.

Q: Did you?

SQUIRE: No, of course not. And particularly when I knew that there was a Toyota repair shop! But another thing that happened was we went away for Christmas after Ross had joined me. And the day that we came back, it was freezing cold, and we couldn't figure out why it was so cold. And we noticed that our plants were moved from the windows. And we asked the people downstairs who were watering our plants and kept an eye on our

Library of Congress

apartment. And they said, yes, they walked in that morning. Clearly they had one of these, “Uh-oh, they're coming home today, we'd better quickly water the plants.” And the windows were wide open.

And this was a trick that the Soviets did a lot, particularly when there was an empty apartment. They would open windows so that the pipes would burst. First of all it would be a real mess. They would do that or they would unplug a freezer. Of course you had all your meat for six months or something like that and you'd come back and there was a horrendous smell and everything was gone.

Q: So it was not really the kind of security problem where you were in danger, but you were being harassed.

SQUIRE: It was harassment. That's exactly what it was. It was trying to break down your will. But they had very carefully moved the plants away from the windows. It was all done so that... And also they knew that we were getting back that day, so I think it was more again just so that we would arrive back and have a freezing apartment as a reminder that we were back there.

Q: The Cold War literally!

SQUIRE: So that was '87 Christmas. But '88 June, it was a lovefest. We had the 1988 Summit between Reagan and Gorbachev and everybody was embracing and kissing babies. Americans were the greatest thing ever. Soviet people from when I arrived - I can still remember - people asked me, “Why does Reagan want war? Why is Reagan so against peace?” To, “Oh we think Reagan is wonderful. We just love your country.”

And the doors were open. Sakharov was brought back from Gorky. Intellectuals were suddenly being used instead of being suppressed by Gorbachev and the whole Communist apparatus to stir up discussion and to sort of get people moving and move toward economic liberalization and make the changes that they were really going to have

Library of Congress

to make with the country. And so suddenly we went from small receptions and trying to drag people into our Embassy to having to be more exclusive because the place was just teeming.

Q: Did that change the atmosphere in the Embassy?

SQUIRE: Absolutely.

Q: In what way.

SQUIRE: Well it changed the atmosphere definitely for the better for officers who had contact, who had Russian, who had a working knowledge...

Q: You had Russian, right?

SQUIRE: Yes. And also my job was reaching out to the press. When I first arrived, 95 percent of our work was with the American journalist community. Nick Daniloff, when he wrote his book about his experiences in Russia and about the time that he was captured by the Soviets in exchange for Dmitri Zakharov in New York talked about researching his Decembrist grandparents' roots. Having time to go to the Lenin Library and setting up an exhibit at the Lenin Moscow State University. And he had that time. His replacement was still getting letters from Nick Daniloff asking him, "Could you please look up such and such in the library?" and he was saying, "Get real! Life is too exciting."

And partly the journalists turned to us because they had no access except to very staunch, officially approved people, the Soviets. So they were looking to us for information and we were looking to them for information and helping them. Our job was mostly trying to help them and setting up briefings in the Embassy with the Ambassador and various people. By the time I left, it had completely flipflopped and our work was all with the Soviet press and we were setting up briefings with the Ambassador with the Soviet press. Either open or on background. Which is pretty amazing, that there was enough trust that the Ambassador

Library of Congress

would meet with a group of twenty or twenty-five Soviets and just talk openly knowing that the background rules would follow and they wouldn't identify him as the American Ambassador saying blah-blah-blah.

I was working very closely with Soviet television placing things on television and working with Soviet journals and things. And people were calling. In the beginning, we'd get calls from wrong numbers from people who would find out they had reached the American Embassy and go, "Aaaagh!" to the end when we were swamped with calls from people who wanted an American film or some closed city was dying for magazines. Could I come out and talk to them about...

It was just a wonderful period where you could travel around the country. All these places that had been closed which meant that we couldn't travel to, let alone the average Soviet citizens couldn't travel to, were being opened up and we could go out to these places. My husband did a wonderful trip along the Volga through all these different areas including Mordovia, the only American who had been there since... I think there were a couple who were sent there - it's a big prison camp area - because they were caught trying to smuggle drugs through the country. It was just amazing. It was like opening up a country because there were these places that had never been touched by Westerners let alone an American. There was this sense that they'd come up and want to touch you.

I was very involved with our Ambassador at the time, Jack Matlock, who had very good Russian and was eager and anxious to be interviewed and get as much exposure as possible. And we'd travel around the country and people would say, "Oh, we know your Ambassador! Oh he's wonderful! He speaks" Ukrainian or Georgian or whatever because he had this knack of - if he was being interviewed by a certain nationality - of at least learning a few words in their language. He's a great linguist.

At that point USIA had these large traveling exhibits that were traveling around the country. They had been stopped again through the Carter years and had started up again

Library of Congress

during this period while I was there. And he would go down to open it up and he would start out in whatever the native language was. So whether it was Latvian or Georgian or Ukrainian, and so everyone just assumed that he spoke the language. So I remember being in Kiev and people said, "Oh he speaks Ukrainian! Oh isn't this wonderful!" And everybody knew him across the country.

Q: Wow. Does your husband also work for USIA?

SQUIRE: No, he works for the State Department.

Q: Is that good or bad? How does that partnership work?

SQUIRE: Well it's good and bad. It's good in the sense that it's two different organizations when we're applying for jobs overseas, we're not both trying to draw out of the same, say USIA, pool of two officers or three officers or one officer in many posts. So to that extent it's good that he's State and I'm USIA. But in general it's a lot harder to get tours together because our assignment cycles are different, our personnel officers are different. USIA, because it's so much smaller, assigns a year ahead of the State Department so that you really have to start working early to try to get an assignment or to try to keep enough jobs available so that when finally Ross, my husband's list of available jobs comes up, we can find out.

When we were coming from Moscow, we both put our lists side by side to find out where there were jobs together and they were mostly places like Lesotho. You know, countries that we hadn't heard of in East Asia. So we sort of gulped and we found about a handful including Tel Aviv. At that point we didn't want to come to Brussels, we didn't want to come to Washington right away. Well, we ended up coming back to Washington. There are always lots of jobs back here. In general, they say that tandem couples end up spending a lot more time in Washington because of the job situation. It's that much tougher to find a job plus it's also that much easier to get a job when you're in Washington. You can really

Library of Congress

work on it and talk to people and find out what's available, what may be coming up and things like that.

Q: So you think it might be easier now going out from Washington to find an assignment?

SQUIRE: Well, that's always been the idea! (laughs)

Q: You've been here for two years?

SQUIRE: We've been here for two. This is the third year and actually I'm on a leave of absence right now.

Q: How do you feel about that, being on a leave of absence?

SQUIRE: I like working so it's hard, but I also really like my children. I think growing up in the Foreign Service I appreciated having my mother there and she had to work doubly hard to create a life for us and make the transitions easy for us.

Q: I remember your saying something about her providing canned milk or something like that. You now are in a position as a mother yourself to really appreciate what she had done.

SQUIRE: Oh absolutely. One of the things that she did as they were going to Czechoslovakia in 1951, and I guess even more when they went to Hungary just after the Revolution. Both of those countries were still feeling the devastation of World War II, but mostly the Soviet takeover. Shelves were stripped bare and there just wasn't food. Health was a real concern. They knew that they couldn't eat the dairy products or drink the milk, that they were going to have to live on condensed milk. And in order to get my brothers used to the idea of having condensed milk, for about six months before they went overseas, every Sunday as a special treat she would give them half a cup of this condensed milk. And of course they thought it was just wonderful! What a wonderful thing!

Library of Congress

And so when they got there, the idea that they could have it every day! That was just the greatest thing for them.

And some other stories that she has. For example, just little things like knowing your children well enough and knowing how they take to traveling. There were four of us and three of us she thought could basically travel out of one suitcase. All we needed were the clothes we had on and maybe a toy. Whereas my second oldest brother - he's just older than I am - had to have everything. He had to have a suitcase all of his own. Mostly all his stuffed animals, and he knew exactly how many he had even before he could count. His special toys, his special clothes and things like that. So that when they would get to a hotel, she would throw those all out on the bed and he would feel at home. It's things like that that you have to know about what is important to your children.

And I can remember never feeling that any one particular bed or any one particular room was... [End of Tape I, Side A; Beginning Tape I, Side B]

SQUIRE: ...that we didn't get attached to any one particular place. And so periodically we would either change rooms or switch around. If there were two beds in one of my brother's rooms, well maybe one night I'd sleep in there with him. This was encouraged. And I can remember even into my teens, for some reason we were all awake late at night and we'd suddenly decide, "I'm going to go and sleep in so and so's room and so and so will sleep in my room," and we would just switch around in the middle of the night. And it was kind of fun instead of feeling, "Oh this is my room and I have to be in this room." I think that also helped with the moves. It was always really exciting to move, to stay in a hotel and go somewhere else.

Q: So you really had two role models: your father as the officer and the mother as how to be the mother of a movable family.

Library of Congress

SQUIRE: I think that's really true. And my father was a strong role model as a Foreign Service officer and had the traditional Foreign Service sense of service and...

Q: This is all what you've gotten from him?

SQUIRE: Yes, it has very definitely come across.

Q: That you feel that you have an obligation to serve, that kind of thing?

SQUIRE: Absolutely. And it's sort of corny, but a love of one's country and a need to really represent the country. And I can remember feeling as a small child that I had to act a certain way or I would bring dishonor to my country. And to the extent when my father was in Vietnam for two years and we were back in my mother's home town in Massachusetts, I can remember in junior high they had the little softbound yearbook and people got different awards. And I had the best mannered, which again I think comes out of this whole thing because you learned when you were overseas, you curtsied, you shook hands, you did all these things that goodwill diplomats did, and you certainly never did anything wrong.

And I can remember even when I was back on a study tour in Leningrad in 1977 on my own, still being concerned that I had to be careful in what I did. I had to be careful and not be entrapped in any way because my father was a diplomat and no matter where he was at that point - I think he was in Australia or just going to Australia - I didn't want to bring dishonor to him or to my country.

And coming back fro- I think everyone feels this way when they've been overseas for a long time. Coming back this last time from Moscow after being there for four years, my husband and I were up in Maine on a little vacation before our son was born. And there were some Brits or some Germans or... Anyway, we heard these other people. And all of the sudden I remember thinking, "I can relax. I'm an American. This is my country. I don't have to worry that someone's going to look at me askance and say, 'Oh those Americans!'"

Library of Congress

Those loud Americans,” or whatever people's stereotypes of Americans tend to be. And it's sort of a liberating feeling in its way. (laughs)

Q: Terrifically. (pause)

SQUIRE: ... in Mozambique, so all the more so. These were the Americans that they knew, so.

Q: That's right. How old were you when your parents were in Hungary? Do you remember that at all?

SQUIRE: I was born while they were there.

Q: So you don't remember that really.

SQUIRE: No. I remember vague things about it, but not really.

Q: Nothing substantive.

SQUIRE: No.

Q: What was it like when your father was in Vietnam for those years, having no father for two years practically?

SQUIRE: That was really hard. That was the hardest adjustment. If you ask any Foreign Service dependent what the hardest adjustment is, it's coming back in pre-teen or teen years or even university years when you've been overseas for a long time. And that was hard. I was coming from Moscow and of course that was sort of exotic, and we went to this little town in Massachusetts. The furthest anyone had been was Boston, maybe Maine. One girl had been to California. But I was coming from the moon.

Q: That made you really different.

Library of Congress

SQUIRE: Oh my gosh. And another thing, when you're that age, you don't want to be different. That's really at the point where you just want to meld in with everyone else.

Q: You were about thirteen?

SQUIRE: Thirteen. And so to be hauled up in front of assemblies and in classes and, "Talk about the Soviet Union!" Well Russia. "Tell us about Russia!" And of course the thing that was really eye-opening to me that I'm sure other dependents also feel was that when we were in Moscow, we were constantly bombarded by anti-American propaganda and propaganda. There were posters everywhere comparing the Americans to Nazis, and there was a lot of anti-Vietnam sentiment, obviously. You'd see American soldiers bayoneting Vietnamese and things. There were some really sort of nasty things. So there was all this anti-American propaganda and propaganda in general about what life was like in the United States.

I remember thinking, "Oh it's going to be such a relief to go home because it's home and you don't have that." And so coming back and in a way to meet sort of the same anti-Russian propaganda was very interesting to me. They had the sense that Russia was a big concentration camp which, yes, there were and there probably still are concentration camps in some areas.

Q: But you had a sense of divided loyalties a little bit.

SQUIRE: Well no, it was just a shock to me to find out that, no, the United States wasn't totally open and totally objective.

Q: That they could do the same kinds of things the Russians were doing.

SQUIRE: That there was stereotyping. And this idea that I had come from... And the question I kept getting was, "How did I escape?" Because there was this idea that somehow it was twisted in people's minds with, again, Nazi Germany, and this idea of this

Library of Congress

huge barbed wire fence that I had somehow climbed over or through or something. So that was a shock to me. And all Russians are bad and the Soviet Union is an evil place. And obviously it wasn't. You had enough examples and you knew enough people there to know that people are people. But that again was the hardest return because, here it was my country, and why did I feel so uncomfortable coming back?

Q: Did you find the anti-war movement disturbing?

SQUIRE: Yes, because again I think when you're overseas, you have to support your government and our government was in the war. My father went to Vietnam very unhappily. He did not support what we were doing there. But he had one boy in college, another one just about to go. It was the one time when he really did look for another job and decided that he basically...

Q: You mean outside of State?

SQUIRE: Outside of the Foreign Service. On his way back, he went to Brussels and talked to different banks and organizations. He had a few leads, but I think he was nervous enough about supporting a family. But he went and he did his job, not very happily. Although it turned out, probably, to be one of the most interesting tours he ever had because he was out there. Not in Saigon, in the Central Highlands. He got very close to a lot of people.

I can remember two times in my life seeing my father cry. One was after our dog was poisoned in Brussels and they did an autopsy in the bathtub and left it just all there and he had to clean that all up. And the other time was when Vietnam fell and everyone that he knew and that he had been close to was going to be wiped out because they were the Montagnard hill people who had never really been assimilated by the South Vietnamese and then clearly were never going to be accepted by the Communists. And he knew they were just going to be slaughtered. And that was awful.

Library of Congress

But anyway, that was really hard.

Q: And all of you were going through something bad at that time, right?

SQUIRE: Well my brother was in college and going on peace marches and my other brother was a senior in high school and starting with these marches. My one brother in college was coming down to Washington and marching. So he was very definitely against the war and ready, if he got drafted, to sign up as a CO [conscientious objector]. My other brother couldn't see himself doing that and so if he had been drafted, he probably would have gone. That was the point where they pulled the student deferments back and it was toward the very end of the Vietnam War. And plus my Dad was there and would come back with this incredibly shaved military hair cut.

But for the longest period of time we weren't getting any news from him because they had given us the wrong address when he first went out there, and for six months, our letters were being returned. Well he stopped writing because he didn't know why we weren't writing, and there was this total disconnect until finally Goldwater's phone link - I don't know if you know anything about this. But Goldwater set up through Arizona a whole link for...

Q: Like ham operators?

SQUIRE: Yes. And so about every few months we would get a phone call, and it came via, you know... And it was just wonderful because you could hear his voice and talk to him. And he actually came home one Christmas and then - I think he came back twice in the period that he was there. But that was a very hard time. It was particularly hard for my mother, you know raising these teenaged kids in a very conservative small town in Massachusetts after she had been living overseas and realized that she no longer... I mean, yes, this was her town and she had lots of relatives and friends, but they were living one life and she had lived another and didn't quite fit in.

Library of Congress

Q: Did you feel very close to your mother because of that? Did you two have a bunker mentality there?

SQUIRE: Oh absolutely. My mother and my younger sister very definitely. And my brother who was a senior. The decision was made to keep him in boarding school, keep him at the school that he was going to so he could graduate that year.

Q: He had been in boarding school while you were in Moscow?

SQUIRE: Yes. For three of the four years. And my other brother had been the whole time and then been in college. So that they were basically gone and we would see them at breaks. But the three of us who were left were absolutely very, very close.

Q: And were you able to stand back to back and support each other through all these difficulties?

SQUIRE: To a large extent, but on the other hand I was only thirteen and my sister was only seven and so that was hard. I think it was definitely the hardest on my mother. A very, very hard time for her.

Q: Yes, I'm sure. Because the two of you must have adapted to a certain degree.

SQUIRE: Yes. And you do I think with the Foreign Service. And that's another thing. It makes people that much stronger. My mother is such a strong person because of all the adversity and the changes and things. I mean starting out with going to Hungary, as you asked, and en route to Hungary when they were in Vienna ready to go to Hungary when the Revolution hit. So they were out for basically six months before they got in.

Q: Yes, she has quite a story about that.

Library of Congress

SQUIRE: Yes. That's tough, but it prepares you for being separated. And when my father died, I think she was that much more prepared because of all the moves and all the adjustments that we were forced to make.

Q: I didn't even know she was a widow. She has such elan. She doesn't seem like a person who is bereaved.

SQUIRE: That's the way she is. She's probably the first to admit that a lot of it is the Foreign Service because of the adjustments and the moves that you're forced to do.

Q: I think that's right. Do you have any trepidation about bringing up your sons in the Foreign Service?

SQUIRE: Yes. First of all, safety is always a concern. When we were growing up, there wasn't as great a fear of terrorism as there is today. Although when my parents went to Czechoslovakia in 1951, that was the worst place in the world, the worst part of the world that you could go to at that time. I don't know whether my mother talked about it, but the Diplomatic List was five people long and my father was number six. And so they didn't know, if the Soviets were going to sweep through, whether they would be carted off because they didn't have official diplomatic immunity. So what it meant was that they lived with packed suitcase with vitamins and medicines and things in case they were whisked off. And they literally did that for two years.

Q: No, I don't think she mentioned that.

SQUIRE: And today, you think, "Czechoslovakia!" For most of this whole period of the Cold War, it was probably one of the safest places again for the same reason that the Soviet Union was, because it was such a strong police state.

Q: Fascinating.

Library of Congress

SQUIRE: So we didn't have the concerns that people had, say in Africa, where you had to worry about health and illnesses. I think of the people I know who have died from virulent malaria and things like that. But Czechoslovakia even when Ross was there, they had a part-time nurse, but basically they had to be medevaced to Germany which was three hours away, and every once in a while a regional medical person would come through, and he compared them to Ghana. And they were shocked to think that they were being compared in terms of evacuation to an African country where you think of having to fly hours to get anywhere. And that's a concern, particularly with little ones.

Q: That's a very big concern. (break) We were talking about the problems of medical facilities in some of these posts, and getting evacuated and all that kind of thing, how hair-raising it is, and you said you had some problems in Moscow.

SQUIRE: Oh this last time, yes. Well, again, the Soviet facilities are in general probably about the equivalent of Third World, except for really specialized things. I can remember when we were in Leningrad, for example, when my father was there, the Security Officer fell down the stairs - it was a really freak accident - and hit his head hard. They were really concerned about his brain. Well, the best neurosurgery facility in the country - or a major one - was right around the corner from the Consulate, and he was taken there and it saved his life. They're wonderful. I can really see brain surgery, anything like that. Or laser surgery.

At the same time, there was a woman who had been involved with Joseph Kennedy, Jr.'s accident. I don't know if you remember that. He had a car accident at one point. I think one woman was killed and another woman was paralyzed. Well she was in a town outside of Leningrad at a special facility where they were really on the forefront of surgery. They had her walking around. She had come in a wheelchair and they had her off a wheelchair, so there were great strides and things that weren't done in our country. But in terms of day-to-day medicine.... (phone rings)

Library of Congress

Q: So you were saying the day-to-day medicine you wouldn't want for your dog?

SQUIRE: Yes. Obviously there are times when there are medical emergencies and people have to go into the hospital. There was a woman who was there when my husband was originally assigned to Moscow in 1980-82 when we met there who was back again in the Embassy when we were there again later. People tend to sort of rotate through. When she was there the first time, her appendix ruptured and burst and she had to be taken to Botkin Hospital which is the hospital for foreigners generally. One of the things when she came out, she had these strange round welts on her back. And it turns out there's this technique that they still use called "cupping" where they create a vacuum.

Q: Oh you're kidding!

SQUIRE: You take a glass jar and you put a candle under it to get the air out and you put it on someone's back or wherever you have an illness or a wound or something and it's supposed to draw the... Originally when it was done in this country at the turn of the century, it was used to draw the evil humors out. But then it's supposed to bring the blood close to the surface and maybe that will heal, if it's an obstruction or something. So anyway, they did that to her.

And you'd see people in the markets with these welts and things as they were healing. So that was always sort of alarming. And another they did was give a lot of shots. They gave a lot more shots than we would. People would go off and they would have their arm bandaged and come back with shots. Nobody really knew why, but they had shots.

I was medevaced with a miscarriage only I wasn't medevaced in time. It happened in the course of a Friday, or sort of leading up to a Friday. And there was one Finnair flight out because our medevac point was really Frankfurt, but a lot of people chose to go to Helsinki because it's that much closer and Finnair was always flying back and forth. And I didn't

Library of Congress

make the flight so I ended up having the miscarriage in the nurse's apartment and then getting on the next flight.

Q: Was it advanced or was it early in the pregnancy?

SQUIRE: It was right at the thirteen-week point, so it was right there.

Q: The sort of normal time to do ... ?

SQUIRE: Yes, exactly, exactly. But one of the nice things was that the doctor that handled us, and also Leningrad, now St. Petersburg, was a woman, and she had had three or four children of her own. That was very nice. She had originally hoped to specialize in obstetrics, but she was a general internist and she was very nice.

Q: You were lucky then.

SQUIRE: Yes. But again, there was no thought of putting me into a Soviet hospital. It was more-or-less get out of the country as soon as possible. Attempts were made and then it just didn't work. There was a lot of that, arranging to get people out very quickly. As Duty Officer, when the rotation would come up on the weekends, you were often involved with some sort of a medevac or other. There were a lot of things. Also, I think the mentality was to get someone out rather than worry about the complications if you didn't, so people were medevaced for slight provocation rather than...

Q: In case it should develop into something. You wanted to avoid that.

SQUIRE: Right. But back to worrying about children growing up in the Foreign Service. I think that in general children can be pretty impervious. There are a lot of things that parents have to do. There are ways that you can cushion the moves and the changes.

Q: As your mother did.

Library of Congress

SQUIRE: Yes. And I think it's very important to do that and to make sure that they come back to this country so that they are Americans and that you take vacations here. One of the nice things about being overseas, obviously, is being able to travel if you're in Europe or in East Asia, to travel. You know, go to Bali and those wonderful exotic places. It's also very important to come back and spend the time in this country developing roots.

Q: With the children. When you have the children.

SQUIRE: With the children. I mean developing the children's roots because the children that I've seen that have had the most problems are people who went from one Latin American country to another and they grew up in the local schools, bilingual, but never really belonging to any country. And to expect them to be able to come back and adjust when they're in high school or college is just impossible.

Q: So for you, that was never a problem because your father almost always lived in the Eastern bloc and there was no way that you were going to assimilate there!

SQUIRE: Right. In fact, when we first got to Moscow, my parents tried to get us into the Russian schools and I actually could have gone, but my two older brothers were too old. The Soviets refused to even take them. So the one went to the Anglo-American School for the eighth grade and then had to go to boarding school. The school didn't go any further. And the other one had to go to boarding school because he was already too old.

My younger sister, however, went to the Russian kindergarten, the “detskysad” which is literally “children's garden”. She still has these wonderful stories, remembers vividly the learning style that they had. Everybody would take a nap at the same way and they'd face the same way, put their heads down and face the same way, and they'd be yelled at if they tried to move. When they were playing outside, they were told how to play and what to do. When you're in the sandbox, this is what you will build. It's sort of like the Montessori extreme. (laughter)

Library of Congress

Q: She was only there a few years? Enough to imprint on her?

SQUIRE: She was only there for about a year and a half. Basically my parents took her out after Lenin's birthday when they had these pageants and little songs and things. And she announced - she was probably about four at the time, maybe four and a half. She announced to my parents that Lenin was like Jesus. And she had just realized. We'd been home the summer before and she'd been to Vacation Bible School and had gotten a little pin with Jesus on it and they'd sung little songs and Jesus loves little children. And Lenin. They had little pins with Lenin on it and they had little songs and games to sing to Lenin, and Lenin had loved little children. And at that point, my parents decided that she needed a little more acclimatizing to American life and it was time to move her out of the Russian school. (laughter) So she went to the kindergarten.

Q: Oh dear, that's great! What are you doing about deciding where you're going to go next, or is it time to do that yet?

SQUIRE: Well for me very definitely it's time. For Ross...

Q: How long have you been on leave?

SQUIRE: Six months.

Q: So you'll be going back to work in six months?

SQUIRE: Well I should be going back to work in six months, yes. I'm still debating trying to extend it and really work for a job two years from now when we'll be going overseas. It's tough because both of us... Ross was promoted a year ago and I, ironically enough, was just promoted while I was on leave. You know, I laugh that if I stay out long enough, I can become an ambassador! (laughs) I just won't get paid!

Library of Congress

But it's tough because now we're both FSO-ones which means that there's a limited job pool that we can bid on. And in fact I was sort of hoping not... I mean I wasn't expecting to be promoted and I wasn't thinking I would be, and there are certainly a lot of jobs that I could apply for. I can still apply for [FSO level] two jobs, but it gets tougher clearly as you go up, and Ross is now debating whether to try for the Senior Foreign Service which will make it even that much harder trying to get jobs together. So we're sort of at a turning point really. Does my career take precedence? Does his career?

Most tandems who have successfully found jobs together have found they have to alternate. Like we went to Moscow because of my job there. We came back here. This is just sort of the way it worked. Ross ideally would not have gone back to Moscow so soon and from Prague. It certainly didn't hurt him and it was a wonderful time to be there. I'm glad it didn't hurt him. We came back here now very definitely because of a job that he got here. That's fine. This is a good time. We'd been out for five years. It's sooner than we wanted to, but fine.

But now it's really a question, and he's wondering, "Should I take the lead and then try to get the job?" And I'm not sure I want that. Again, as a woman I have concerns about family. Again, how driven am I? How driven do I want to be? Yes, I really enjoy the Foreign Service life and it's very hard for me to imagine not working overseas. And as you know, the jobs are very limited if you're not a Foreign Service officer.

Many people think that it's an ideal situation to be a tandem. But I think you really have to want to be a Foreign Service officer to do a good job. I really don't recommend that people take the Foreign Service exam unless they're interested in doing it because there are a lot of things. You're not a free agent, you have to support your government no matter what, you have to do certain things. Fifty percent or ninety percent of what you do is junked or it never goes anywhere and you have to live with that. You have to live with all the dignitaries who come through, the senators and their wives and everything like that.

Library of Congress

Q: Of course you have to do that if you're anybody's wife, even if you're not an officer.

SQUIRE: But not necessarily anymore.

Q: I know not necessarily, but if you're the senior wife it's awfully hard?

SQUIRE: Oh it's very hard, and of course everyone always wonders, "What's wrong with her?" if she's not involved. So that, for example, people who were teachers or had a profession that could travel, I envy to some extent because they were in some ways I think much more flexible.

Q: Really! (laughs)

SQUIRE: If they enjoyed it. Again, I think there are a lot of people who go into teaching English as a second language because they think, "Oh I can do it." But they don't like teaching. And I think that's again like being a Foreign Service officer when you don't want to be a Foreign Service officer, but you think, "Oh well, it's a career and I can follow my husband." It's a bad reason to do it.

Q: I think that's very good advice. I love teaching and I was a teacher before we went into the Foreign Service, but ironically I always wanted to be in USIA. I did some contract jobs for USIA both in the States and overseas. I always thought, at least if I worked for USIA, I'd always have a job.

SQUIRE: Yes. Well...

Q: But you see, when I was interested in it was the early '70s and it really hadn't started hardly at that point and so we didn't realize what happens down the pike is that, in fact, you both have job problems at that point instead of just one of you having problems.

Library of Congress

SQUIRE: It is true, right. And you can imagine, it's that much harder trying to place two, plus family and schools and all the other concerns that you have.

Q: Medical.

SQUIRE: Oh, absolutely. And then in the back of your mind you still have the aging parents and all the things that are happening back home that are tugging you, too.

Q: Oh yes. Some of the transcripts are heart-breaking. About being in this sandwich situation with kids in boarding school and parents are ailing and you're in China.

SQUIRE: Oh it's terrible. Exactly. I was very lucky. When my father had a brain tumor and was dying, I was able to get on a plane instantly.

Q: You were in Moscow then?

SQUIRE: I was in Moscow. But I was lucky. I just went to the airport and I got a ticket and I came which I didn't think I could do, but I could do.

Q: But it wasn't something you could count on, you're saying.

SQUIRE: No, but again I wasn't in Mozambique, for example. I didn't have to worry about this connection and that connection and whatever.

Q: You had to come that fast?

SQUIRE: Yes, because I thought I could. He still died while I was en route, but at least I was there a few hours later and my family was there and we could all be together. But it's terrible. And people ask, "What do you think about being a tandem and joining the Foreign Service?" And I always tell them, "Think before you do it. The Foreign Service can be tough for everyone. For a single officer, it's tough. It can be very lonely. For an officer with a family. I can remember. My mother was basically a career woman who had to give up

Library of Congress

her career and all my life I heard, "You have to be your own person, you have to have your own career."

Q: In other words, there was a part of her that regretted that and that didn't want you to have that problem.

SQUIRE: Oh absolutely. No question. Q: Interesting. That doesn't come on in hers.

SQUIRE: She's not going to like this, but when my husband and I were engaged, we were visiting his family in Minnesota and decided, yes, we were going to get married. I called up my parents and I said, "We're going to get married." This was while I was still in graduate school in Washington and I hadn't gotten an offer from USIA yet. And my mother's reaction was not "Congratulations," although they loved Ross, but "Are you sure you want to do that when you're not in the Foreign Service yet?"

And my father got on and said, "Listen to your mother." (laughs) Because obviously he had had to listen to her all his career and he knew. And here I was, educated, college and master's and everything and the idea, I guess as they saw it, of following Ross around the world. And again in the old Foreign Service, the wife was an appendage and not... In some ways... My mother would argue that now it's even worse because then at least to some extent you were credited. She, unlike, most women, liked the old system with the evaluation.

Q: I think people her age do. All the ones I've met did like that.

SQUIRE: I would just hate that. I would really resent that. And I can see that the idea of Ross being rated by whether I entertain or how well is just crazy. But for my mother, that was very important because that's what she could do. And she still can do it so much better than I ever will be able to. But to some extent it's not expected of me the way it was. And it really isn't of the spouses who aren't Foreign Service officers nowadays.

Library of Congress

Q: I gather even the Foreign Service officers don't do as much entertaining as they used to.

SQUIRE: No, they don't. Absolutely not.

Q: The whole modus operandi has changed. It's very interesting. They're going to have to give some kind of recognition to the dependent spouses and I don't think they've figured out how yet. It's such an uncomfortable position. I'm very interested that your mother felt that way about you, about how you should have your own career.

SQUIRE: Oh, absolutely.

Q: Was she relieved then when you were panelled?

SQUIRE: Oh very definitely, very definitely. (laughs) No question. And I think my father was delighted that I went with USIA, because at two different points in his career he had covered USIA. In Hungary, when they cut back the staff, he was the PAO as well as other things and had loved it, had really gotten into the whole jazz world and was very interested in it. That was one of the real areas that you could branch out there. And then he worked for VOA two different times in his career. He was very interested... I think that had a lot of influence on me.

Q: Well that's great ... I was interested in USIA too. I think it's a fun branch of the service.

SQUIRE: I think it is also. You don't have to take yourself as seriously. (laughs)

Q: You often meet more interesting people, too.

SQUIRE: Oh, much mor(overlapping voices). And also in this day when traditional diplomacy is being taken over more and more by Washington and shuttle diplomacy and the individual diplomat isn't sent off for years and years and years as I think of the last

Library of Congress

century when people would be sent off. Oh, like ... have you read Mrs. Little's transcript? That's the only one that I've really listened to.

Q: *No.*

SQUIRE: Of going off to China and just six ... Every year they'd have to send in this document of what her husband had accomplished. And that was it. No one had ever read it and no one would ever read it.

Q: *No weekly telegrams.*

SQUIRE: No. Or passing dignitaries, or anything. Nowadays, so much is done by these Secretaries of State flurrying through - certainly in Moscow, and other places - that I think USIA has that much more of a role. Reaching out to the people who are in the cultural elite, the journalists and people.

Q: *Yes.*

SQUIRE: I think it's really fun. I love those people anyway.

Q: *And you miss it, being on leave now?*

SQUIRE: It's hard, but it's also a hard life, because when you are overseas you're working all the time. And particularly with USIA, I think, even more than State Department, your job is outside of the office and so you're doing that much more entertaining and receptions and traveling around to all the various centers, and you're involved with the academics and the cultural types who are leading the after-hours lives.

Q: *That's harder to do once you have children.*

SQUIRE: It's much harder. It's much harder. Ross and I really worry about what will happen if we go back to Moscow, which we've thought about.

Library of Congress

Q: That would be your most logical next choice?

SQUIRE: No. Actually, I think neither of us really wants to go back right now. We want to branch out and do something else. But, our lifestyle was... We were working all the time, and it was nice because the two of us could do it together. But with kids you don't want to do that. You can't do that.

Q: Yes. But, on the other hand, it's very hard to get the job done. When you're overseas it's very hard to do part time work. There is no such thing.

SQUIRE: Absolutely. No. Ironically, I remember it during the time I was there, because our contacts were so few with officialdom, official Soviets, it meant that a lot of people in the Embassy had sort of regular hours because you did your job, you met with officials, even people in USIA. My counterpart the first year basically went home every night and spent time with his family. Because Ross wasn't there - even more because he wasn't there - I didn't want to go home alone, so I'd go out and do things. I met with a whole lot of people and got to know a lot of the unofficial community and a lot of the other people.

Q: To shift the perspective though, when you were growing up, did you feel in Moscow - or was it the same for your father when you were in Moscow - that he was home in the evenings? Did they do a lot of entertaining?

SQUIRE: They did a lot of entertaining.

Q: It doesn't seem to have bothered you any.

SQUIRE: No, they did a lot of entertaining. He was very busy. Again, as the Science Officer, he was one of the few people who really had a lot of contacts in the Embassy. The Cultural Affairs Officer and my father had probably the most contacts, except for the Ambassador and DCM, because of their rank. So we were always having a lot of people over, or my parents were always going out.

Library of Congress

They also did a lot with Third World or third country diplomats that we just didn't have time to when I was there this last time. But when Ross was in Prague, because the situation was so similar, a very closed society, there were always these very formal dinners. (overlapping voices) They would drive me crazy, I hate that, in a way I'm glad I wasn't there. He was always going to these black-tie dinners at the Swedish diplomat's, or the Swiss diplomat's, or vice versa. He was having them.

And everybody had a lot of help, so they all entertained each other. In Moscow, because he was the Economic Officer and did Soviet internal economics, he had to meet all these people. There were like two different groups — the NATO group, small, seven, I believe, of which perhaps five would get together for lunch on a regular basis, say, once a month. Then a larger expanded OECD group that would convene maybe every other month. And amongst themselves they were always having little parties. We just dropped out of that, it was just too much. It was just crazy to spend time with the same people when you could reach out and see Soviets and Russians and travel, and do things.

Growing up, I know that my parents did so much more entertaining than I did.

Q: Did you mind that?

SQUIRE: Well, I minded it when I didn't see them, and there were long periods of such time. The worst period was when they were in Canberra. I took time off and was there with them. I was a junior in college. My father, the DCM, would have three receptions a night, he was very busy. I remember his saying one night, "I don't have to go out tonight!" And that was so rare, because they were always busy. And doubly so because our Ambassador was a political appointee who didn't like any of that. He'd arrived around the Fourth of July, thought the Embassy party was a terrible thing, didn't like it, so he said "We're not going to do it."

Library of Congress

Well, the Australians couldn't have cared less but it was all the other embassies calling up — little embassies who would say, “Did we not get our invitation?” (laughter) “Are we not in favor this year?” And we would have to explain, “Well, you know ... “So my father was having to do a lot of representation that traditionally an Ambassador would do while ours was jet-setting round the country doing what he wanted to do.

My father also had a lot of friends because he'd spent 11 years growing up in Australia with his father. A lot of those people were now in Canberra or Sydney, plus his sister and family were in Sydney. It was wonderful but it kept him that much busier.

Q: And you were thinking, “Why am I dropping out for a year when I never see my parents?”

SQUIRE: I know! I can definitely remember growing up without a father around a lot, because he was working so hard. That's one of the tough things about the Foreign Service. I look at Ross now, here, and one of the really nice things about USIA when you return to Washington, by five p.m., most people are out, you leave the office. And I did — and I was working for the director, so probably I should have stayed longer, but I didn't. And that was fine, as long as I worked hard during the day.

At the State Department, forget it, they keep these incredible hours. Ross was working for the Counselor, Bob Zoellick. Almost two-thirds of the first year it was all right, there were three of them. Then one left, his job was never filled so that left two, and they were working later and later at night. At least now, as Deputy Executive Secretary, he's on duty every other night, so every other night I know he's not going to be home until late. It can be really late, then sometimes it's as early as nine or nine-thirty, other nights it's 11 or 11:30.

On the alternate night, though, he's home for dinner so he sees our sons whereas before, he didn't at all. It got so that during the week he would only see the nineteen-month-old Blake in the morning, but if Blake slept late that morning he didn't see him. Or if the

Library of Congress

sleeping schedule changed and we didn't want to wake him up at seven, we were out the door.

At least I had time in the afternoon. I would get home, we'd play, have dinner, et cetera, but Ross never did. And that's one of the reasons I wanted to take time off now, too. That's another thing that really worries me about life overseas.

Q: It's very hard to put that on hold. And it's hard for you to absent yourself from a lot of those things.

SQUIRE: Absolutely. And the children are only little, as you know, for such a short period of time.

Q: Well, actually I found it was easier when they were little, because they went to bed at 7:30.

SQUIRE: And then you had some time together?

Q: Well no, because Mozambique was like Prague for you: we went out all the time. There would be a "window" when we would come home — well, I was working part-time so I would be home a lot. But we would put the children to bed early, so that when we went out for dinner they were always asleep.

SQUIRE: That's good, because they didn't always see you leaving.

Q: True, but the bad part was that since they went to bed early, they also got up early. I'd come home at midnight from a party, and at six a.m. I'd have a child coming in wanting breakfast. I was determined not to have them brought up by nannies, so I just basically didn't. It seems to me it might be even harder when they're of a certain school age, because they then stay up until eight-thirty or nine, want help with their lessons and so

Library of Congress

oWhen you were that age, living in Moscow, did it bother you that your folks went out a lot? It doesn't sound as if it did.

SQUIRE: Well, another thing about getting up in the morning: We always had breakfast together, that was very important, we'd always have one meal a day together. Many people don't do that, even back here. Even if we ate separately in the evening, at least we'd had that one time to be together as a family for breakfast in the morning. We're all relatively "morning people," probably because of that or despite it. And then my mother was home, she wasn't working. So while I was in school I knew she was there at home.

We did have a nanny for three of the four years, mostly for my little sister. It was sort of a chance thing. A friend of ours living in Germany had a wonderful friend whose daughter was coming over. Her job had fallen through and she wanted to come. Did we know someone who needed a nanny? So my parents said, "We'll take her." She came, and she was so wonderful that they decided to try again, and we went through two others during a year but it didn't work out and we didn't have another.

But that was nice because my parents didn't have to worry about a babysitter in the evening, when I was younger until I could be it. Sometimes being on your own would be scarier at night - the electricity would go out, things like that, but in general, no. And it was just bad, because my father wasn't around a whole lot. I think of that - during my childhood growing up without a father to a large extent because he wasn't there, he was working on weekends and ...

Q: And then you had a big chunk when you were in middle school of him ...

SQUIRE: That was really hard, too. But I think most Foreign Service families become closer then because you are the unit, you are the support as you travel around the world. So we were always very close. I mean — yes, I grew up without my father in the sense that he wasn't there but I knew he loved me and we were very close. So I didn't have the

Library of Congress

estrangement that people go through as they grow up, and I never felt that sort of rebellion against my family. It was precious, it was my solidity, my strength I guess.

Q: Yes. You didn't have to do muc(laughing) to get away.

SQUIRE: No, true. And also, the fact that my mother was there made a big difference. I think some of the most successful families I know also, if they had a nanny, had a good one. I can think of a couple of tandems and they've kept the same person all the way...

Q: So it's like an aunt...

SQUIRE: Exactly, or like an older sister that travels around the world with the family. That's been wonderful, I know people who've had that. And then there are always heartbreaking stories of people who've returned from lower Africa and their nanny leaves them in the lurch when they're back in the States. I know people to whom that has happened.

Q: They've gotten the Green Card...

SQUIRE: Exactly. Or even without the Green Card, they've disappeared. I know of one case: after three weeks. That's hard, for two working people having suddenly to come up with someone, and the poor child having gone through the wrenching experience of ...
[end of tape]

BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Spouse: Ross Wilson

Spouse's Position: Econ Officer; Deputy Executive Secretary, Department of State

Spouse Entered Service:1979Left Service: N/AYou Entered Service:1984Left Service: N/A

Library of Congress

Status: Tandem Couple

Posts: Marguerite Squire as child: 1957Budapest, Hungary 1959-62Brussels, Belgium
1966-70Moscow, USSR 1978Canberra, Australia 1981Leningrad, USSR

Marguerite Squire as officer: 1985-86Munich, FRG 1986-90Moscow, USSR (now Russia)
1990-presWashington, DC

Ross Wilson: 1977-80Washington, DC 1980-82Moscow, USSR 1982-85Washington, DC
1985-87Prague, Czechoslovakia 1987-90Moscow, USSR 1990-presWashington, DC

Place/Date of birth: Frankfurt, FRG; October 21, 1957

Maiden Name: Marguerite Hovey Squire

Parents (Name, Profession):

Christopher A. Squire, FSO (Deceased)

Patricia Cody Squire

Schools (Prep, University): Holton Arms School, Bethesda, Md.; Dartmouth College,
BA;Johns Hopkins SAIS, MA

Profession: Foreign Service Officer, USIA

Date/Place of Marriage: Washington, DC; March 1984

Children:

Blake Wilson, 2 years

Grady Wilson, 4 mos.

Library of Congress

Honors (Scholastic, FS): Phi Beta Kappa, Dartmouth; USIA Meritorious Honor Award and Superior Honor Award for service in Moscow

End of interview